Richard Spiegleman
Dept. of Health

4911 Aurora Drive
Kensington, Maryland 20895
December 29, 1987

Mary Helen Doherty
Director of the Bureau of Alcoholism Services
Snata Clara County
976 Lenzen Avenue
San Jose, California 95126

Dear Ms. Doherty:

I was delighted to hear that Santa Clara County intends to include self-supporting, self-governing, sober living houses as part of its proposal to the NIAAA for a demonstration grant. I don't believe there is anything more important as a first step in independent living than a safe house where residents help each other stay sober while gaining self-reliance and self-respect. I will be available and eager to visit Santa Clara County to tell you how the Oxford Houses, which operate much like the transitional houses you intend to establish, have functioned successfully in the Washington, D.C. area for the past 12 years. We know our model works and it should help your houses begin on a sound footing.

Oxford House have proven beyond question over the last dozen years that alcoholics can manage recovery houses and help one another achieve sobriety. I was fortunate enough to be one of the founders of Oxford House Inc. in 1975 and was for many years president of the umbrella organization as it expanded. We have formalized a system under which houses are self-supporting, democratically-run, elect officers, admit new residents, and handle finances. We have expanded without outside support. Residents take such pride in where they live that they cheerfully contribute to start new houses. We have always wished there were enough Oxford Houses to share the concept with everybody who wanted to live in one.

Since 1975 I have been a writer and magazine editor with the Atomic Industrial Forum in Washington and an executive with Burson-Marsteller, the world's largest public relations agency. In recent months, with the encouragement of Oxford House residents and former residents, I have worked full-time in looking for ways to expand the concept.

I look forward to working with Santa Clara County.

Yours sincerely,

John V. O'Neill

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